

Our Lady's Catholic High School

Equality Policy

Love, Learn, Grow

At Our Lady's, we place Christ at the heart of everything we do. Through our school 'Being One of Ours' virtues, we nurture each individual to love, learn and grow in their unique, God-given potential, ready to be of service to the world.

Last review: Summer Term 2025

Next review: Summer Term 2027

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1. Statement of Intent

As a Roman Catholic School, Our Lady's Catholic High School is fully committed to a policy of equality of opportunity and access in employment and education. We are a diverse, welcoming, Christian learning community committed to nurturing respectful and responsible citizens, empowering ALL learners to flourish. We seek to create an environment where all members of our school community are treated with respect and are valued for the contribution each makes.

As stated in the Second Vatican Council:

"All human beings are endowed with a rational soul and are created in God's image; they have the same nature and origin and, being redeemed by Christ, they enjoy the same divine calling and destiny The forms of social or cultural discrimination in basic personal rights on the grounds of sex, race, colour, social conditions, language or religion, must be curbed and eradicated as incompatible with God's design."

(Gaudium et Spes)

The ethos and mission statement of the school support this Policy by countering stereotypes and prejudice and reducing the effects of discrimination.

2. Legal framework

1. We welcome our duties under the Equality Act 2010 to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations in relation to the nine protected characteristics:
 - i. age (as appropriate),
 - ii. disability,
 - iii. gender reassignment
 - iv. race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin
 - v. marriage and civil partnership
 - vi. maternity and pregnancy,
 - vii. religion or belief,
 - viii. sex
 - ix. sexual orientation.
2. We welcome our duty under the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to promote community cohesion.
3. We recognise that these duties reflect international human rights standards as expressed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, and the Human Rights Act 1998.

3. Notes relating to the Equalities Act 2010

- The characteristic “race” includes colour, nationality and ethnic or national origin.
- The characteristic “religion” also includes religious or philosophical belief or lack of religion or belief.
- The act rules against direct discrimination whereby a person is treated less favourably in relation to one of the protected characteristics than they would otherwise be treated. If the protected characteristic is race for example, less favourable treatment includes segregation from others.
- The act also identifies indirect discrimination, whereby a provision, criterion or practice is applied which discriminates in relation to a relevant protected characteristic, and in so doing, puts someone at a disadvantage and is not a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.
- The act also defines harassment as engaging in unwanted conduct which violates a person’s dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person, due to one of the protected characteristics.

Schools must not discriminate, either directly or indirectly, nor victimise or permit harassment in the following ways;

- Through their admissions arrangements, or by non-admittance.
- In the way education is provided.
- In the way the school permits the pupils access to a benefit, facility or service, or by not permitting access.
- By not providing education.
- By excluding from school.
- By subjecting the pupil to any other detriment.

4. Guiding principles

In fulfilling the legal obligations cited above, we are guided by six principles:

Principle 1:

All learners are of equal value. We see all learners and potential learners, and their parents and carers, as of equal value:

- whether or not they are disabled
- whatever their ethnicity, culture, national origin or national status
- whatever their gender and gender identity
- whatever their religious or non-religious affiliation or faith background
- whatever their sexual identity.

Principle 2:

We recognise and respect difference. Treating people equally (Principle 1 above) does not necessarily involve treating them all the same. Our policies, procedures and activities must not discriminate but must nevertheless take account of differences of life-experience, outlook and background, and in the kinds of barrier and disadvantage which people may face, in relation to:

- disability, including individual learning needs so that reasonable adjustments are made
- ethnicity, so that different cultural backgrounds and experiences of prejudice are recognised
- gender, so that the different needs and experiences of girls and boys, and women and men, are recognised
- religion, belief or faith background

- sexual identity.

Principle 3:

We foster positive attitudes and relationships, and a shared sense of cohesion and belonging. We intend that our policies, procedures and activities should promote:

- positive attitudes towards disabled people, good relations between disabled and non-disabled people, and an absence of harassment of disabled people
- positive interaction, good relations and dialogue between groups and communities different from each other in terms of ethnicity, culture, religious affiliation, national origin or national status, and an absence of prejudice-related bullying and incidents
- mutual respect and good relations between boys and girls, and women and men, and an absence of sexual and homophobic harassment.

Principle 4:

We observe good equalities practice in staff recruitment, retention and development. We ensure that policies and procedures should benefit all employees and potential employees, for example in recruitment and promotion, and in continuing professional development:

- whatever their age
- whether or not they are disabled
- whatever their ethnicity, culture, religious affiliation, national origin or
- whatever their national status
- whatever their gender and sexual identity, and with full respect for legal rights relating to pregnancy and maternity.

Principle 5:

We aim to reduce and remove inequalities and barriers that already exist. In addition to avoiding or minimising possible negative impacts of our policies, we take opportunities to maximise positive impacts by reducing and removing inequalities and barriers that may already exist between:

- disabled and non-disabled people
- people of different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds
- girls and boys, women and men.

Principle 6:

Society as a whole should benefit. We intend that our policies and activities should benefit society as a whole, both locally and nationally, by fostering greater social cohesion, and greater participation in public life of:

- disabled people as well as non-disabled
- people of a wide range of ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds
- both women and men, and both girls and boys
- people of all sexual orientations.

5. The curriculum

We keep each curriculum subject or area under review in order to ensure that teaching and learning reflect the principles set out in this policy.

6. Ethos and organisation

We ensure the principles listed in this policy apply to the full range of our policies and practices, including those that are concerned with:

- students' progress, attainment and achievement
- students' personal development, welfare and well-being
- teaching styles and strategies
- admissions and attendance
- staff recruitment, retention and professional development
- care, guidance and support
- behaviour, discipline and exclusions
- working in partnership with parents, carers and guardians
- working with the wider community.

7. Addressing prejudice and prejudice-related bullying

The school is opposed to all forms of prejudice which stand in the way of fulfilling the legal duties referred to in paragraphs 1–3:

- prejudices around disability and special educational needs
- prejudices around racism and xenophobia, including those that are directed towards religious groups and communities, for example antisemitism and Islamophobia, and those that are directed against Travellers, migrants, refugees and people seeking asylum
- prejudices reflecting sexism and homophobia.

We keep a record of prejudice-related incidents and, if requested, provide a report to the local authority about the numbers, types and seriousness of prejudice-related incidents at our school and how they are dealt with.

8. Roles and responsibilities

The governing body is responsible for ensuring that the school complies with legislation, and that this policy and its related procedures and action plans are implemented.

The Headteacher is responsible for implementing the policy; for ensuring that all staff are aware of their responsibilities and are given appropriate training and support; and for taking appropriate action in any cases of unlawful discrimination.

All staff are expected to:

- promote an inclusive and collaborative ethos in their classroom
- deal with any prejudice-related incidents that may occur
- plan and deliver curricula and lessons that reflect the principles in this policy
- support students in their class for whom English is an additional language
- keep up-to-date with equalities legislation relevant to their work.

9. Information and resources

We ensure that the content of this policy is known to all staff and governors and, as appropriate, to all students and their parents and carers.

10. Religious observance

We respect the religious beliefs and practice of all staff, students and parents, and comply with reasonable requests relating to religious observance and practice.

11. Staff development and training

We ensure that all staff, including support and administrative staff, receive appropriate training and opportunities for professional development, both as individuals and as groups or teams.

12. Breaches of the policy

Breaches of this policy will be dealt with in the same ways that breaches of other school policies are dealt with, as determined by the Headteacher and governing body.

13. Monitoring and review

We collect, study and use quantitative and qualitative data relating to the implementation of this policy, and make adjustments as appropriate.

In particular, we collect, analyse and use data in relation to achievement, broken down as appropriate according to disabilities and special educational needs; ethnicity, culture, language, religious affiliation, national origin and national status; and gender.